

AGENDA ITEM # 5F

December 12, 2006

Action

MEMORANDUM

December 8, 2006

TO: County Council

FROM: Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Staff Director

SUBJECT: **Action**—resolution supporting the Purple Line, Corridor Cities Transitway, and Metro funding

The attached resolution would have the new Council reaffirm support for the Purple Line, Corridor Cities Transitway, and the Davis Bill, which would provide substantial guaranteed funding for the Metro system. The prior Council had expressed its support for all three, either in the form of a resolution or a joint letter.

There are two new aspects in the resolution now before the Council. First, it indicates that, for the Purple Line, the Council supports a light rail line that is “largely at-grade.” In the past some have supported the Purple Line but only if it is entirely or mostly underground. As the recent experience with the Dulles Rail Extension clearly shows, any substantial undergrounding—as through Tysons Corner—can cause a project’s cost-effectiveness to plummet, and thus threaten Federal funding for the entire project. There will likely be some sections of the Purple Line that will be grade-separated—the Maryland Transit Administration’s study is currently considering bridges and underpasses at major crossings and beneath a section of East Silver Spring, for example—but most of the line will need to be at grade for the project to have a realistic chance of being built.

Second, the resolution indicates a Council preference that the Corridor Cities Transitway be a light rail line. While prior Councils have strongly supported the CCT, they have been silent as to whether it should be a busway or light rail line, although most of the public statements by individual Councilmembers—and most of the support in the community—have been in support of light rail. MTA’s environmental document (which is due out sometime in 2007) will describe in great detail the costs and benefits of each option, and the Council will take the opportunity to provide detailed comments before the State makes a decision.

Resolution No.:

Introduced:

December 5, 2006

Adopted:

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Council Vice-President Knapp and Councilmembers Floreen, Leventhal, Ervin and Berliner

Subject: Support for the Purple Line, Corridor Cities Transitway, and H.R. 3496

Background

1. The most pressing regional transportation priorities are the Bi-County Transitway (Purple Line), the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), and House Resolution 3496 (H.R. 3496), which would guarantee funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).
2. By mid-2007 the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) intends to complete Draft Environmental Impact Statements for:
 - the Bi-County Transitway (Purple Line), a 14-mile transit line from Bethesda to New Carrollton, and also serving Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, Langley Park, the University of Maryland, College Park, and Riverdale; and
 - the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), a 13.5-mile transit line between Shady Grove and Clarksburg, and also serving the Research & Development Village, Gaithersburg, and Germantown.
3. H.R. 3496 would provide \$1.5 billion of Federal aid over the next ten years for WMATA. This bill also would require Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia together to dedicate a matching \$1.5 billion over the same period and would include Federal representatives as members of WMATA's Board of Directors.
4. During the 2006 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB 1345 and SB 850 (which the Governor signed) requiring the Maryland Department of Transportation to undertake a comprehensive study of the 20-year estimates for operating and capital costs for transit. The study is to look at funding systems in similar state and local jurisdictions and develop new funding strategies necessary to leverage federal funding. The state has created the Transit Funding Steering Committee in response to this legislation.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. The Council expresses its strong support for the Bi-County Transitway (Purple Line) and Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), and it urges the Maryland Department of Transportation to proceed expeditiously to the design and construction of these projects. For both the Purple Line and Corridor Cities Transitway, the Council supports:
 - a generally at-grade light rail line that is primarily on its own right of way;
 - excellent service linking the places identified in the Background section of this resolution;
 - completion of a hiker-biker trail alongside the Purple Line from Bethesda to Silver Spring and the Corridor Cities Transitway for its entire length; and
 - a community- and environmentally-friendly design that mitigates negative impacts in a cost-effective manner without impeding the speedy implementation of these project.
2. The Council strongly urges Congress to pass H.R. 3496 or substantially similar legislation to provide WMATA with a desperately needed infusion of revenue to keep up with the maintenance of its existing infrastructure and to acquire enough rail cars and buses to relieve overcrowding.
3. The Council strongly urges the state of Maryland to provide resources for transit that will meet the funding requirements in support of the federal legislation.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council